

## **St Mary's Pastoral Parish Council**

### **Minutes of meeting Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

#### **Present:**

Father William Wright (Parish Priest)	Jeff McGillan (Activities)
Simon Knowles (Chairman)	Martin Mayhew
Cathy Binns (Support)	Simon Stockdale (Liturgy A)
Mick Britton (Liturgy B)	Chris Senior (Note Taker)

#### **Apologies:**

Charlotte Burrell (Formation)  
Sheila Lund (Interaction)  
Amanda Kelly (School)

1. **Welcome and opening prayer** was led by Fr William
2. **Introductions** were made by all attending PPC members for the benefit of the Note Taker.
3. **The minutes of the meeting on 19th April 2013** were approved and accepted.
4. **Matters Arising**

#### 2) **Representation and web details**

Fr William shared the PPC submissions that he had so far received to give members an idea of a 'model' length and tone for the 'pen pictures' (c. 3 sentences) plus a request to send better resolution quality portraits for some members.

**ACTION:** All PPC members to consider a redraft of text, and if necessary the submission of a new photo to Fr William for inclusion on the website.

#### 6. **The Shrine of Our Lady of the Crag**

##### *a) Shrine: Health & Safety*

It was confirmed that an advert had been placed in the Bulletin for a tree surgeon (plus approaches made to known specialists).

Jeff McGillan reported that the professional advice subsequently received was that tree(s) on Church land at the top of the crag had been identified as potentially dangerous and would be recommended for felling; the owner of the neighbouring land had been consulted and was amenable. Lower level trees in the garden area were not believed to pose a particular hazard.

**ACTION:** Jeff McGillan to contact the Council to investigate procedures required to obtain permission to remove the dangerous tree(s) from the 'Forest of Knaresborough'. This information would then help inform the obtaining of a quote for tree removal works to properly establish costs.

Simon Knowles reported that the underwriters had now provided formal written assurance that full insurance cover (c £5m) did apply to the Shrine site in respect of site safety. It was also acknowledged that the Shrine Group were already fully mindful of safety on the site, including the focus of site improvement works they had already completed, and in their closure of the site in wet, slippery conditions.

*b) Shrine: Funding support*

The question of investigating Leeds Diocesan funding support for the Shrine was revisited

**ACTION:** Mick Britton to contact Kevin Anderson 'Finance & Property Department: Diocese of Leeds' to explore possible sources of funding or support.

In the general discussion that followed it was suggested that Government-sourced support for the Shrine might also be available through an (unidentified) local tourism support initiative.

It was also noted that *Churches Together* might be willing to assist, especially if the Shrine were made more accessible to other Christian churches. Fr William noted that an ecumenical *Churches Together* service was already scheduled to be held at the shrine on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August as part of the Feast celebrating the 'Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary'.

7. Acolytes & Altar servers

Fr William observed that he had explained to the congregation the reasoning behind some of the changes introduced in the celebration of Mass at St Mary's. However as the role of the Acolytes was still comparatively new to the older children, he believed it prudent to wait until these posts were more established before drawing particular attention to their roles.

Members of the PPC expressed unanimous approval over the marked improvements in the demeanour and attitudes of the altar servers and new acolytes during Mass as a result of this new initiative. It was felt to have been a success, not least in helping to engage older children in the Mass and in providing a natural continued progression for younger children.

Fr William noted he was also seeking support for children's involvement in the Gospel procession (SEE ALSO Item 5) through St Mary's School, and had already received support from the *Catholic Life Committee* (sub-division of the School Governors).

8. Church Maintenance Update

The PPC had not yet received copies (for information) of the *Fabrics Committee Report* that is issued to the Parish Finance Committee.

**ACTION:** Chris Matthewman to forward to PPC members the imminent *Fabrics Committee Report* on the state of the Church and future remedial, repair or construction works.

## 10. Confirmation Candidates 2013: Preparation Programme

Fr William thanked all PCC members for the helpful suggestions he had received identifying opportunities for exposing the recent Confirmation Candidates to charitable Christian care activities. Due to time constraints it had only been possible to arrange [3] talks to the last group of Confirmation Candidates, although the ideas already expressed would be considered for future years.

### 11 a). St John's Coffee Morning after Sunday Services

Jeff McGillan noted that the joint monthly coffee mornings in the Church Hall and Garden after Sunday services for both St John's and St Mary's churches had proven to be very successful and were popular in both parishes. It was hoped these shared social events would continue (perhaps as a series of alternating reciprocal meetings) even after the completion of the renovation work on St John's Parish Hall.

Formal thanks were expressed acknowledging the work of various volunteers who had assisted in setting up the tables and in providing refreshments for these events.

It was observed that in all Church related fund raising that practices continued to be used which ensured best financial transparency (ensuring all income and expenses were fully accountable and auditable).

## **5. Gospel Procession Review (Years 3-6)**

Fr William sought feedback following the introduction of the Children's Gospel Procession at Sunday 10 am Family Mass. Of the observations made:

- Simon Stockdale noted there was some concern that the numbers of children in Years 3-6 attending this Mass could be quite low. It was felt that both the Children's procession (and their remaining seated at the front of the church for the Homily) could be regarded by the children as being intimidating in a very small group.
- Fr William noted that he tried to be mindful of attending numbers of children and deliberately did not initiate the procession if there were too few children attending.
- It was noted that the older children's attention in the Mass seemingly improved by their being involved in the procession, and they did appear to engage more with the Homily.
- A suggestion was made that the School might be engaged more directly to help encourage attendance and involvement in the Mass.
- Martin Mayhew noted that exposure and tuition from the Children's Liturgy group to the Year 2 (and under) on the procession would also help build up expectation and anticipation of involvement in the procession as they grew older.
- It was also suggested that more enhancements to the service could further involve and inspire children e.g. lighting of tea-lights (or candles?), procession of candles, carrying of the Bible by all children from the congregation (not altar servers as at present) etc.

## 6. Drop in Attendance Figures

The discussion was informed by a prior circulated table showing changing patterns in average weekly Mass attendances (average of 331 participants in 2008-09 reduced to 269 in 2012-13).

General comments of the PPC centred on causes, and potential suggestions for action.

### Causes & Observations:

- It was questioned whether the decline matched a parallel decline in Mass attendances in other local churches (or even a national pattern) or was just specific to St Mary's.
- The decline in numbers of children (and parents) in last 3-4 years was especially marked; this also witnessed by lower numbers attending Children's liturgy.
- Changing attitudes within the Church had reduced the 'sense of obligation' associated in not attending Mass on a weekly basis. However it was notable that during important Feasts (typically within Christmas, Easter etc) that attendance at Mass was very high.
- It was interesting to note that the decline in collection income was markedly less than the decline in attendances.
- The comparative lack of Elderly Care Homes in Knaresborough meant older St Mary's parishioners moving into care effectively left the parish boundaries and would find continued attendance at St Mary's more difficult.
- The embarrassment of being recognised by others as infrequent attendees may also be a cause in continued absence; a reinforcing cycle of behaviour.
- The wide variety of times of Sunday Masses offered in various local churches may mean that St Mary's 10:00 am is not as attractive due to other 'lifestyle' issues.
- It was felt that overly long Masses (in excess of 1 hour 15 mins) in recent years may have contributed to declining attendances.
- Mick Britton noted the changes to the Liturgy in 2011, and associated alterations to musical responses in the New [English] Translation of the Mass have caused some disaffection.

### Potential Solutions

- The Parish database provided a particularly useful resource to help identify non attending Catholics (c. 66% of the list membership were not regular attendees).
- Invitations to individuals to re-engage could be through a combination of: Mailshot, emails, or doorstep visits to local addresses (e.g. reviving the 'Parish Mission' idea).
- It was believed a 'meet the new priest' initiative might be a useful way to engage with absent parishioners.
- Identifying a Sunday Mass for targeting to lapsed participants may help encourage returns (and minimise potential individual embarrassment by encouraging attendance in numbers). This invitation could be based on an invitation to 'come and see what has changed at St Mary's'.
- A more pro-active approach could be usefully made to seek out, meet and involve new families or Catholics who have moved into the Parish.
- The introduction of 'Year Group' Masses each Term (rather than just a Termly whole School Mass) could potentially help increase the frequency of attendances, especially from families with several children.
- School Masses could be directly followed by more involved, organised social events and refreshments e.g. barbeques etc.
- An enhancement of the 'community' role of the Church (e.g. refreshments, and social events) could also encourage more general attendance and involvement.

- It was felt potentially useful to advertise why Mass attendance was a 'good' thing by those members who do attend regularly i.e. selling the positive benefits to individuals.
- Drafting a 'Marketing Plan' to help investigate, identify and reach out to potential participants may be of value.
- It was believed more might be done to engage with the School (e.g. Friends of St Mary's, Governors, Teachers and children) to encourage attendance, including Church representation and assistance at School social events e.g. Picnics.

Fr William thanked the PPC for their helpful comments and suggestions which would be considered and developed as appropriate.

**ACTION:** All members of the PPC to draft '3 Benefits' of going to Church (and 3 more benefits specific to attending at St Mary's); this potentially to inform an outreach activity to the Parish.

## 7. Welcome Pack & Parish Board

A note for PPC information that Sheila Lund was working on a Welcome Pack; more details would be forthcoming in due course.

## 8. Dogs, St Mary's garden, children and Toxocara canis

Item deferred until next meeting

**ACTION:** 'Dogs, St Mary's garden, children and Toxocara canis' to be raised as an Agenda item at the next PPC Meeting

## 9. PPC Constitution

Fr William invited feedback to finalise the revised terms of St Mary's PPC Constitution & Guidelines.

This debate was informed by previously circulated copies of 3 key documents:

- a) DIOCESE OF LEEDS *Parish Pastoral Councils: Guidelines and Model Constitution*
- b) ST MARY'S RC CHURCH, KNARESBOROUGH: *Parish Pastoral Council: [Draft] Guidelines and Constitution*
- c) [Draft Notes] *Composition of the Parish Pastoral Council and Terms of Office*

The following reflects the final recommended changes [ in red text <sup>1</sup> ] to above document b)

3.6 The candidate with the most votes is considered elected. In the case of a tie **lots will be drawn.** ~~the candidate who has been worshipping at St Mary's for longest is considered elected. Where a candidate receives the most votes within two groups, he/she is considered elected to represent whichever group in which he/she received more votes and is there after discounted from election in any other group.~~

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<sup>1</sup> Additions to the original text signified by **Bold** text; ~~struck-out~~ text indicates deletions.

3.8 The Parish Priest appoints five members to the PPC. These also serve for no more than two consecutive **terms of three** years, but may be elected or appointed again at a subsequent date.

4.3 The PPC shall elect one of its Members as a Liaison Officer who shall assist ~~the Parish Priest~~ in maintaining good communications ~~between the PPC and the Parish in general and shall also be responsible~~ **and** for wider publicity as required. The name, address, telephone no, e mail address along with a photograph of the Liaison Officer shall be displayed on the Church Notice Board.

7.1 At the last meeting of each year the PPC shall agree dates for the Meetings to be held the following year (~~including, as far as practicable, Meetings of Sub-Committees~~) and the Parish shall be notified of these dates by way of the noticeboard and web site.

7.2 ~~Two~~ **Three** Sundays before the date of each Meeting of the PPC, Parishioners shall be reminded that a Meeting is to take place and shall be invited to submit items for discussion, by either e mail or letter to the Parish Priest.

7.3 The Agenda for each Meeting shall be arranged by the Parish Priest together with the Chairperson ~~and one other Member of the Council elected for this purpose by the Council itself~~. If the Parish Priest acts as Chairman of the PPC, the Council shall elect ~~one~~ **two** Members to assist him in preparing an Agenda for the meeting.

Other sections of the Guidelines and Constitution were queried, most notably;

6. 'Relationship with Deanery & Diocesan Pastoral Councils',

8.5 'Quorum of the PPC...'

10 'Arrangements during the vacancy of a Parish' .

However following discussions it was agreed that the text in these latter sections was accurate, and therefore did not require any further alteration.

Fr William thanked all for their contribution, and the implementation of the changes noted above was expected to form the final version of the *Parish Pastoral Council: Guidelines and Constitution*

**ACTION:** Sheila Lund to edit and circulate as appropriate the final version of ST MARY'S RC CHURCH, KNARESBOROUGH: *Parish Pastoral Council: Guidelines and Constitution*.

**ACTION:** Acceptance of the final draft of the *Constitution* to be voted on in the next PPC meeting; to be added as an Agenda item.

**10. Any Other Business**

a) Routines for Bulletin (Non Post or Email)

Cathy Binns noted that in recent weeks hand-written submissions for inclusion in the weekly bulletin had apparently been omitted. This may be due lack of clarity to parishioners about where they should submit any hand-written copy, and for the team of Bulletin editors about where to check for new notices.

**ACTION:** Chris Senior to circulate to fellow Bulletin Editors a routine to check the Atrium letter board for messages, and arrange for a reminder to be posted in the Bulletin of the routines to submit messages (i.e. letters marked FAO Bulletin posted in the atrium).

b) Contact Details of PPC Members

Although members already had e-mail addresses it was felt useful that all phone contact details should also to be circulated among PPC members.

**ACTION:** Chris Senior to initiate an e-mail to all, passing on phone details of PPC members attending the meeting (and inviting absent colleagues to circulate their own phone numbers).

**11. Future Meetings**

1900 – 2030 Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2013

**12. Final prayer**

Fr. William closed the meeting with a prayer